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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJANI FOREIGN MINISTER "DOES NOT RULE OUT"
UNIFIL CONTRIBUTION, SEEKS MORE INFORMATION

REF: BAKU 1209

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse, per 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) In an August 23 telephone conversation with the Ambassador, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov said that he had discussed the UNIFIL mission with Jordanian officials (King Abdullah II paid an official visit to Azerbaijan August 22-23). The Jordanians, he said, do not want to contribute troops at this point and, like the Jordanians, Azerbaijan wants to learn more about the peacekeeping mission. Mammadyarov said that while the role of the peacekeepers was very clear in Iraq and Afghanistan (where Azerbaijan has 151 and 23 troops, respectively) and to a lesser extent Kosovo (where 34 Azerbaijani troops serve), this is not presently the case in Lebanon. Mammadyarov added that Azerbaijan should not be "out in front of everyone else," and needs more information on what other countries plan to do. He noted that as Azerbaijan formulates its policy on UNIFIL, it must also take into consideration the estimated 30,000 to 35,000 Israeli citizens of Azerbaijani origin. Mammadyarov said these are his personal views; he had not yet discussed the issue with President Aliyev or the Minister of Defense and could not provide a more definitive position until he does so. He added that he was pleased that the United States was taking an active interest in Azerbaijan's position on the issue.

¶2. (U) In August 23 remarks to the press, Mammadyarov made the same points, saying that Azerbaijan "does not rule out" a contribution to the enhanced UNIFIL mission in Lebanon. He added that a final decision on whether to contribute troops would be made only after UNIFIL's status and mandate were clearly determined.

¶3. (C) Comment: Mammadyarov's August 23 public and private comments on a possible UNIFIL contribution were far more positive than his previous comments. In an August 18 conversation with then-Charge, Mammadyarov categorically rejected any Azerbaijani participation in the enhanced UNIFIL mission. At the time, he said that Azerbaijani did not want to get involved in any Lebanon peacekeeping operations but would send an unspecified amount of humanitarian assistance.
DERSE